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171 are nourished will influence them physically as well as in character, and the Indians have no desire that their children should in any way acquire the natures of such animals.[1])

262 The fear of eating the *heads* of certain animals is probably due to similar ideas. A menstruous woman, as we have seen, is forbidden to 826 eat the head of a parrot, lest she should go mad or be changed into a 774 tiger; and similarly a father, while he is observing the rules of the couvade, must abstain from eating the head of a cow. According to primitive belief the soul or vital power of the body is particularly concentrated in the hair and the head. That the head of a cow is especially regarded as taboo is comprehensible from the fact that animals imported by the whites are generally looked upon with superstitious fear and their flesh avoided by Indians still living in a state of nature.

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[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.* p. 137.

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The favourit colour of the
Indians is red or vermilion, the paint being obtained from the seeds of the plant *Bixa orellana*. But this beautiful shrub does not grow in the Gran Chaco. The Chaco tribes only obtain the paint they appreciate so much from the Indians in the north by means of intertribal commerce.

The Chaco Indians are also in the habit of blackening the face with soot or charcoal on certain occasions.

The typical way of painting the face both for men and women is either to colour the whole face and forehead red with *urucú*, or black with charcoal, or only to apply red or black spots, lines, small squares etc. to the cheeks, to the nose, round the mouth and above the eyes. The eye, which is the organ of the most important sense and the one most exposed to disorders, is generally painted with special care. Sometimes the whole organ is circumscribed by a red line, sometimes red and black lines are only drawn along the upper part of it on the spot normally occupied by the eyebrows, which, being regarded as dangerous, are always carefully pulled out; sometimes protecting tattoo-marks are applied instead of paint, especially by the women. Among the *Tobas*, persons of both sexes generally have the face and forehead painted red. But besides this typical facial painting the Toba women — seldom the men — are in the habit of making special patterns or ornaments upon their cheeks on certain occasions. The patterns used by the Tobas seem to be comparatively few in number; we do not find among them the same abundance of designs as for instance among the Choroti and the Ashluslay. Custom does not require that any special kind of pattern should be applied on a particular occasion. Every woman, for instance for a religious dance or feast, paints upon her face what designs she likes and invents at the moment.

If one asks a Toba girl why she paints her face, she will in most cases simply give the answer that it is considered beautiful, sometimes she will say that it is to please and attract the men. When I asked other people about the matter I was told that the Toba girls paint themselves when they particularly desired a man. Yet it was perfectly clear that this cannot have been the only motive for thus decorating the face, for facial painting was not practised only by unmarried girls but also by young married women, who ought not to have had any reason to put on such an outward sign for the men. As a matter of fact, on closer inquiry I found that the Toba women are in the habit of painting themselves *at the time of their menses*, in order to have a protective charm against the evil influences of which they especially then stand in fear. The ideas

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men abstain from eating fish for some time after the death of a near relation.

Apart from the custom of cutting the hair neither the Tobas nor other Pilcomayo tribes nowadays practise ceremonial mutilations of any kind. Formerly however, as the Tobas told me, they practised the following mourning custom. When a woman died, her eldest son had to cut off one of his finger nails. The nail was fastened to a string and hung round the neck of a dog, which was thereafter driven away. If the son omitted to do this, it was believed that the soul of the woman would enter into the nail and kill him in the shape of a tiger into which it would transform itself. This could be prevented by sending away the nail. The dog carrying it away would meet some other tribesman into which the soul would enter and thus become harmless. for the spirits of the dead are harmful only to the nearest relatives. The Indian who told me this added that the custom is no longer practised by the Tobas, because nowadays it very seldom happens that people are killed by tigers and thus the belief that women are changed into such beasts after death has lost its foundation. This again, according to the Indian belief, is owing to the fact that the medicine-men are now able to provide against such sad eventualities by their incantations and conjurations.

As to the explanation of these observances, we have already seen that the abstention from eating fish is due to the idea that the death-demon may possibly hide in the fish and gain entrance into the body. Of special interest are the mourning customs relating to hair and nails. Hair-cutting as a mourning practice of women is met with among most South American Indians and — like other kinds of mutilation — are essentially purification ceremonies of purely magical significance. In the hair and the nails according to primitive belief the vital power of the human body is concentrated. One who possesses these essential parts of a person's body is believed to possess his soul, through which he will be able to exert magical influence upon him. If this is so, it is conceivable that invisible supernatural enemies would take particular interest in these parts. Consequently, when a woman is in a delicate situation, she takes the precaution to remove and destroy these critical parts of her body. According to Indian belief, women are always more exposed to supernatural dangers than men, and therefore have to be more careful in every respect.

The fear of the dead is also manifested in that their *names* are forbidden to be mentioned. This is another general superstition among the

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

the rope as they had done before. The bird was sitting on a tree stump. The women could not see him because he was black and the stump on which he was sitting was also black. As they were stealing the fish the hawk screeched and the people hastened back to see who was there. The women threw seeds at the hawk but he protected himself with his wings. He cut the rope by which the woman had reached earth and they were unable to return to the sky. They were taken as wives by the men. One man lagged behind, he was the armadillo. He dug in a heap of refuse and there found a woman, but he scratched one of her eyes out with his nails. For this reason there are one-eyed women. The women ate with their vulvas and it is said that their vulvas had teeth. The *carancho*[1] — the culture hero — broke the teeth of their vulvas thereby making it possible for men to sleep with women.

66. The First Women (second version) (Pedro)

Once upon a time men lived without women. The women lived by themselves and were savages. They came and plundered the crops raised by men. The men wanted to know who was responsible for the damage done to their crops. They asked a parrot to watch the crops for them. The parrot sat on the top of a tree and he saw the women coming down from the sky. Instead of calling the men he said nothing and as a joke threw a piece of wood at them. The women saw him and invited him down to play with them. He accepted and the women caught him and pulled his tongue out replacing it with a piece of coal.

A *gallinazo* (vultur, *Cathartes foetens*) was chosen to watch the fields next. He promised to inform them by whistling as soon as he saw the women. The vulture concealed himself among the leaves of a tree and when he saw the women he whistled. The men, who were hidden at a distance, ran

[1] Falco Plancus.

X 539 X 773 up to their fields and tried to catch the women. They buried themselves in the ground in an effort to escape, but the armadillo said he would dig them out. He dug out one after another. The men took them. The same thing happened each time he pulled a woman out of the ground. In the end, angry because he could not keep a wife for himself, he put out the eye of a woman and made her so ugly that no one wanted her. From that time on men have had women.

X 539 X 773 826 The wild women had toothed vulvas. A bird saw them eating corn with their vulvas. He warned the people, but *Tawkxwax*, the Trickster, would not believe him and slept with one of the women, who cut his penis. *Tawkxwax* took a bone and put it in place of his lost organ. He then went in pursuit of the woman and found her just as she was crouching to light a fire. He threw a stone between her legs and broke the teeth of her vagina. From that time on men have had sexual intercourse with women without being mutilated.

67. The Stealing of the Fire (Pedro)

X 539 X 773 372 In olden times the jaguar was the sole owner of fire. He would give some of it away only if presents were given him in return. The people would take fish to him and in exchange the jaguar gave them fire with which to cook. Once a rat with a flattened head, the *sičúm*, tried to steal some fire. He dug his way into the earth until he was underneath the hearth of the jaguar. The jaguar had been watching his fire and he saw the rat just as he was about to take an ember. He struck the rat on the head and that is why it is flat now. [825] Another rat succeeded in stealing an ember. This rat has a black spot on his neck. He was lucky enough to get close to the fire without being seen. He picked up an ember and ran off holding it against his neck. He still has a burnt spot there, the mark of the fire. Using the inside of a cactus as tinder he lighted a big fire and then he distributed it. That is why all men have fire.